

**SciVerse ScienceDirect**

Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 30 (2011) 596 – 601

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCPCG-2011

Is Perception of Social Support hinging on Demographic Factors and Types of Abuse Inflicted on Wife? A Survey Study Employing Malaysian Sample

Fatimah Yusoooff, Zainah Ahmad Zamani, Asmawati Desa, Fatimah Omar,
Cheng Sau Keng

Associate Professor Dr, National University Of Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract

Contemplating that the momentousness of social support in family abuse cases which is evident and discernible, as well as acting in response to the present-day calls in the literature for investigations into social support in intimate partner violence, expressly wife abuse, inspection of social support's difference based on demographic factors encompassing levels of education, ranges of salary, numbers of children and sources of conflict has been noticeably salient contributing to the purpose of ranging the levels of need for social support in different groups of afore-known. By the same token, this study has as well scrutinized the perception of social support hinging on different types of abuse which has methodically been dissected to the department of psychological, physical, sexually as well as financially. In line with the purpose mentioned, a total of two hundred representative female survivors of domestic violence taken from all over the country were assessed through a single-time questionnaire survey by using Social Support questionnaire and Conflict Tactic Scale Questionnaire. By materializing mean comparison method of statistics, the research findings have apparently divulged that there was no remarkable mean difference in social support based on any aforesaid demographic factors. Likewise, different forms of wife abuse were not noteworthy contributing to the mean difference of social support among them. Accordingly, these results have indicated that social support has undoubtedly been paramount to helping the female survivors of abuse in healing process regardless of their different background. Following these results, elucidation of phenomenon has been manoeuvred for discussion.

© 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](#).

Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of the 2nd World Conference on Psychology, Counselling and Guidance.

Keywords: Perceived Social Support; Intimate Partner Violence; Wife Abuse; Psychological Abuse; Demographic Characteristics.

1. Introduction

Perceived social support has, most of the time, been found to be closely correlated with psychological well-being of human (DeLongis, Capreol, Holtzman, O'Brien & Campbell, 2004; Cutrona, 1996; Peeters, Buunk & Schaufeli, 1995; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Cohen & Syme, 1985). In consonance with Major, Cooper, Zubek, Cozzarelli and Richards (1997), social support is conceptualized as a source reflecting the extent to which a person's experience is stressful and allows change of situation by altering the person's interpretation and emotional reaction towards well-being. Hence, social support has been contemplated as an important factor contributing to mental health.

Specifically, social support has always been valuable factor in buffering female survivors against domestic abuse or intimate partner violence. It is particularly paramount given the fact that, usually, abusive husbands or partners may try to isolate their wives to refrain from seeking social support or contacting family, close friends or social

service centres (Browne, 1993; Homer, Leonard & Taylor, 1985). In agreement with the statistics yielded by Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM), cases pertaining to domestic violence that occurred in Malaysia from year 2000 to 2007 have been more than 2500 each year, as presented in Table 1, which indicate the urgency and seriousness of paying heed into such issue. Of the five types of abuse comprising physical, psychological, sexual, financial as well as social, psychological abuse amongst those female survivors has been claimed pronounced, as depicted in Table 2 (WAO, 2010).

Table 1 Statistics for Domestic Violence Cases in Malaysia (Year 2000-2007)

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Domestic Violence	3468	3107	2755	2555	3101	3093	3264	3756

Source. Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM)

Table 2 Frequency and Percentage of each Type of Wife Abuse

Type of Abuse	Number	Percentage
Physical	82	92.1
Psychological	89	100.0
Sexual	29	32.6
Financial	55	61.8
Social	53	59.6

N = 89

Source. WAO STATISTICS 2009 (2010: 9)

Acknowledging the significant role of social support among female survivors of such abuse in helping them cope with issues related to the abusive experiences (Short, McMahon, Chervin, Shelley, Lezin, Sloop & Dawkins, 2000; Fagan, 1989) has apparently strengthened the evidence of social support's intervening effect on traumatic experiences delineated by aggression supervened domestically. To support this view of point, Fry and Barker (2001) as well as Thompson, Kaslow, Kingree, Rashid, Puett, Jacobs and Matthews (2000) have suggested that female survivors of domestic violence with remarkably higher rates of social support and networks may demonstrate better psychological well-being than those with lower rates of social support. As an outcome of intimate partner violence, pursuant to Golding (1999), there were 31 to 84% of battered women suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder compared to estimated 1.3 to 12.3% of this disorder occurred in general population of women, and likewise, there were approximately 15 to 83% of battered women suffered from depression compared to 10.2 – 21.3% depression cases among women in community (Golding, 1999).

In accordance with research findings evidencing the momentousness of support among wife abused, examination of perception of social support based on their nominal demographic variables and types of abuse may aid ranging the need for support among groups with a variety of backgrounds such as different levels of education, ranges of salary, numbers of children as well as sources of conflict between partners. On top of this, investigating the difference in levels of support's perception among wife maltreated psychologically, physically, sexually and economically at the hands of powerful others be going to produce finding on need for social support among these groups with different forms of hurt inflicted on them. Albeit mental health agencies have indicated that there has been inadequacy of research delineating the exigent aspects of social support which conspicuously connect to female survivors' psychological well-being (Fry & Barker, 2002), inspection of social support among wife abused hinged on their demographic elements and different forms of aggression has as well been considered substantial due to its relevance to and findings' insufficiency of this topic.

2 Method

Participants

About 200 respondents were selected for the study.

Instruments

Adhere to the necessity of amassing large-scaled data for more accurate statistical results, questionnaire survey has methodically employed by distributing the verified questionnaire set to each participant, which encompasses three sections of demographic variables, social support and forms of aggression.

Profile of Study Participants

In keeping with the purpose of testing the mean disparity in social support based on participants' demographic characteristics as planned, the first section of the questionnaire contains items requesting data upon each respondent's profile pertaining to levels of education, salary's range, number of children and source that inflicted the conflict.

Correspondingly, levels of education in questionnaire used for this study consisted of primary, secondary, A-level/diploma and degree; Ranges of salary have been divided into groups of no income, 500-1000, 1000-2000 and more than 2000 in *Ringgit Malaysia* (RM); With respect to numbers of children, researcher has drafted it in six categories of no children, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12 as well as more than 12 children, whereas sources of conflict were separated into problems of finance, sexual, family, third party or affairs, children, others as well as multi-sourced conflict.

The instrument used is The Social Support Survey (**MOS-SSS**) and Conflict Tactic Scale by Straus.

Procedure

Subsequent to the identification of population of female survivors of intimate partner violence, representative respondents have been recruited through probability sampling strategy (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003) whereby respondents were randomly chosen from a list of all survivors in Malaysia. In light of assessing the respondents in large scale, questionnaire survey was systematically implemented after briefing given to the respondents. With help offered by few research assistants, researcher has collected questionnaires and entered as well as analyzing the data by using computer software *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS, 1997).

Results

Overall, the participants of different groups according to their demographic elements were classified as demonstrated in Table 3. Of the characteristic of education, more than half of the integral participants were secondary school graduates. Furthermore, there was 60.5% of the two hundred respondents were merely earning 0 to 1000 in *Ringgit Malaysia* monthly whereby this fact has reflected lower socio-economic ability among the female survivors of domestic violence. In dispersion through the sample, group of participants with 1-3 children has become the largest category in terms of number of children. With respect to sources of dispute, categories of multi-source conflict plus attendance of third party in relationship have monumentally contributed to conflict in this study, as exposed in Table 3.

Table 3 Sample Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Category	Number of Participants	Percentage
Levels of Education	Never Attended School	8	4.0%
	Primary	26	13.0%
	Secondary	125	62.5%
	A-level/ Diploma	29	14.5%
	Degree	12	6.0%
Ranges of Salary	No Income	60	30.0%
	RM500-1000	61	30.5%
	RM1000-2000	45	22.5%
	> RM2000	34	17.0%
Numbers of Children	0	15	7.5%
	1-3	108	54.0%
	4-6	49	24.5%
	7-9	17	8.5%

Sources of Conflict	10-12	8	4.0%
	> 12	3	1.5%
	Finance	27	13.5%
	Sexual	6	3.0%
	Family	12	6.0%
	Third Party/ Affairs	42	21.0%
	Children	10	5.0%
	Multi-sourced Conflict	69	34.5%
	Others	34	17.0%

By dint of executing mean comparison strategy, particularly one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Table 4 manifests the mean disparity in perceived social support among the respondents hinged on their demographic characteristics comprising levels of education, ranges of salary, numbers of children as well as sources of conflict. Duly, the research finding proffers that there was no remarkable difference in mean of perceived social support based on any aforesaid characteristics at the significance level of 0.05, there are $F(4, 195) = .754, p > 0.05$; $F(3, 196) = 1.008, p > 0.05$; $F(5, 194) = .510, p > 0.05$; $F(6, 193) = 1.239, p > 0.05$ respectively. Indication has, therefore, been made to explicate the approximate equivalence in need for social support among female survivors of domestic abuse regardless of their education, salary, numbers of children and sources of dispute.

Table 4 Analyses of Variance for Perception of Social Support among Wife Abused based on their Different Demographic Elements

IV		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Levels of Education	Between Groups	915.806	4	228.951	.754	.556
	Within Groups	59213.069	195	303.657		
	Total	60128.875	199			
Ranges of Salary	Between Groups	913.612	3	304.537	1.008	.390
	Within Groups	59215.263	196	302.119		
	Total	60128.875	199			
Numbers of Children	Between Groups	779.835	5	155.967	.510	.769
	Within Groups	59349.040	194	305.923		
	Total	60128.875	199			
Sources of Conflict	Between Groups	2230.498	6	371.750	1.239	.288
	Within Groups	57898.377	193	299.992		
	Total	60128.875	199			

Notes. IV = Independent Variable; df = Degree of Freedom; F = F Ratio; Sig. = Level of Significance.

Analogously, as presented in Table 5, the result exposes the insignificant role of distinctive forms of aggression in affecting the perceived social support's dissimilarity amongst the respondents at the level of significance 0.05, in which high and low levels of abuse in terms of psychological, physical, sexual as well as financial did not bring the difference in mean of social support that perceived by the female survivors, with $t = .570, p > 0.05$; $t = 1.084, p > 0.05$; $t = -.026, p > 0.05$; $t = .134, p > 0.05$ respectively. Given this, the perception of social support among them has obviously been unvarying notwithstanding the discrepant types of aggression encountered.

Table 5 Mean Comparison in Perception of Social Support among Female Survivors Abused Psychologically, Physically, Sexually and Economically

IV		N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
Psychological Abuse	Low	97	55.95	16.68	198	.570	.569
	High	103	54.54	18.07			
Physical Abuse	Low	97	56.60	15.83	198	1.084	.279
	High	103	53.93	18.71			
Sexual Abuse	Low	112	55.20	17.09	198	-.026	.979
	High	88	55.26	17.84			
Economic Abuse	Low	119	55.36	17.50	198	.134	.893
	High	81	55.02	17.32			

Notes. IV = Independent Variable; N = Number of Respondents; SD = Standard Deviation; df = Degree of Freedom; t = t Value; Sig. = Level of Significance.

Discussion And Conclusion

Conforming to the research findings, the perception of social support amongst the female survivors of abuse was invariable despite their distinctive backgrounds concerning education, salary, numbers of children, sources of dispute as well as different types of aggression inflicted on them.

Not surprisingly, the meaningful role of social support in intimate partner violence or domestic abuse cases has considerably been proven via statistical analyses. Study by DeLongis, Capreol, Holtzman, O'Brien and Campbell (2004), which involved a sample of total 83 couples recruited from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, has revealed that both spousal support and spousal strain made remarkable as well as independent contributions to negative affect albeit only spousal support was a significant predictor of next-day negative affect. The abovementioned result has been considered alike to that of Major, Zubek, Cooper, Cozzarelli and Richards (1997) where conflict with spouse was consequentially correlated with subsequent distress.

As well, recognizing that the social support carrying a lot of weight in wife abuse cases, findings of the current study have been supported by Fry and Barker (2002) which conducted on a sample of 145 female survivors of abuse with age ranging from 18 to 67 years old. Fry and Barker (2002) found that satisfaction with the quality of support from the social support networks was high, and the satisfaction with support from men was comparable, if not higher than support from women. To a greater extent, the results yielded by Fry and Barker (2002) have as well revealed that satisfaction with support networks was a potent predictor of self-esteem, emotional health and loneliness.

Momentousness of social support has, in like manner, been acknowledged through the study by Lee, Pomeroy and Bohman (2007) engaging 100 and 61 Caucasian and Asian women respectively, where its results demonstrated that there was an indirect effect of level of aggression on psychological outcomes via the significant mediating variables of perceived social support and passive coping strategies.

Albeit statistics of type of wife abuse for the year of 2009 shown by Women's Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO, 2010) expose that the psychological form of abuse has been inflicted on all female victims compared to sexual abuse which happened on only 32.6% of the female survivors, perception of social support has been equivalent among the respondents of the present study. This has undeniably implicated that female survivors of domestic aggression have, en masse, perceived social support as a necessity for them to cope with this occurrence notwithstanding the form of violence that they underwent, along with the distinct backgrounds in education, salary, number of children as well as source of dispute.

By understanding the discernible role of support from social networks in this group of unfortunate, public awareness beyond coping skills or strategies of female survivors of abuse is considered greatly paramount to alleviating this social sickness or predicament. Ergo, support provided by different parties such as family, friends as well as community is indispensable and quintessential to the growth of survivors for their preferred and better world to come.

References

- Browne, A. (1993). Violence against women by male partners: Prevalence, outcomes, and policy implications. *American Psychologists*, 48, 1077-1087.
- Cohen, S., & Syme, S. L. (1985). Issues in the study and application of social support. In S. Cohen & S. L. Syme (Eds.), *Social support and health* (pp. 3-22). Orlando, Florida: Academic Press Inc.
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 98 (2), 310-357.
- Cutrona, C. E. (1996). *Social support in couples: Marriage as a resource in times of stress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: sage.
- DeLongis, A., Capreol, M., Holtzman, S., O'Brien, T., & Campbell, J. (2004). Social support and social strain among husbands and wives: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 18 (3), 470-479.
- Fagan, J. (1989). Cessation of family violence: Deterrence and discussion. In L. Ohlin & M. Tonry (Eds.), *Family violence: Crime and justice: An annual review of research* (Vol. 2, pp. 377-425). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fry, P. S., & Barker, L. A. (2002). Quality of relationships and structural properties of social support networks of female survivors of abuse. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs*, 128 (2), 139-163.
- Fry, P. S., & Barker, L. A. (2001). Female survivors of violence and abuse: Their regrets of action and inaction in coping. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 16 (4), 320-342.
- Golding, J. M. (1999). Intimate partner violence as a risk factor for mental disorders: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Violence*, 14, 99-132.

- Gravetter, F. J., & Forzano, L. B. (2003). *Research methods for the behavioral sciences*. USA: Wadsworth/ Thomson Learning.
- Homer, M., Leonard, A., & Taylor, P. (1985). Personal relationships: Help and hindrance. In J. Johnson (Ed.), *Marital violence* (pp. 93-108). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Janoff-Bulman, R. (1992). *Shattered assumptions: Toward a new psychology of trauma*. New York: Free Press.
- Lee, J., Pomeroy, E. C., & Bohman, T. M. (2007). Intimate partner violence and psychological health in a sample of Asian and Caucasian women: The roles of social support and coping. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22, 709-720.
- Major, B., Copper, M. L., Zubek, J. M., Cozzarelli, C., & Richards, C. (1997). Mixed messages: implications of social conflict and social support within close relationships for adjustment to a stressful life event. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72 (6), 1349-1363.
- Peeters, M. C. W., Buunk, P. P., & Schaufeli, W. B. (1995). Social interactions and feelings of inferiority among correctional officers: A daily event-recording approach. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, 1073-1089.
- Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM). *Violence against women (2000-2007)*. Retrieved October 7, 2010 from <http://www.wao.org.my/statistics.htm>.
- Short, L. M., McMahon, P. M., Chervin, D. D., Shelley, G. A., Lezin, N., Sloop, K. S., & Dawkins, N. (2000). Survivors' identification of protective factors and early warning signs for intimate partner violence. *Violence Against Women*, 6 (3), 272-285.
- SPSS base 7.5 applications guide*. (1997). Chicago: SPSS Inc.
- Thompson, M. P., Kaslow, N. J., Kingree, J. B., Rashid, A., Puett, R., Jacobs, D., & Matthews, A. (2000). Partner violence, social support and distress among inner-city African American women. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28 (1), 127-143.
- Women's Aid Organisation of Malaysia (WAO). (2010). *WAO statistics 2009*. Retrieved October 7, 2010 from <http://www.wao.org.my/Documents/Annual%20Statistics/Annual%20Statistics%202009.pdf>.